1: Drew G-3 (1862-1872) 1875 AV1 Kashmir AV1

CHAPTER VII.

MARCH FROM JUMMOO TO KASHMIR.

ROUTES FROM THE PLAINS TO SRÎNAGAR, IN KASHMIR—PREPARATIONS FOR THE JOURNEY—JUMMOO TO AKHNÛR; ONE MARCH—TENTED CATCHING AT AKHNÛR—AKHNÛR TO RÂJOURÎ; FIVE MARCHES—RÂJOURÎ TO SRÎNAGAR; EIGHT MARCHES.

After the Middle Mountains, the next tract that will have our attention is Kashmir. Before, however, beginning on that country, I propose to give, in this separate chapter, some account of the roads, but especially of one of them, between the Panjâb and Kashmir, both for an example of the kind of travelling one experiences in such countries as these, and for the sake of connecting in the reader's mind those parts which up till now we have dwelt on with the countries beyond.

ROUTES FROM THE PLAINS TO SIRINAGAR, IN KASHMIR.

The statement of the number of routes between the plains and Kashmir may be varied, the number may be made greater or less, according as one takes in or leaves out the less frequented, difficult, roads, and according to whether one counts the combinations that may be made by following first one route, then by a cross-road joining another. In the Political Map are shown six or seven routes that start from various parts of the plains and unite at Sirinagar the capital of Kashmir, and in Appendix IV. the marches in each route are given in detail.

The various roads are used in different degrees and for different purposes.

The road from Jummoo by Banihâl is the chief commercial route. It has become so for the reason that its starting-point in the hills is not very far from Amritsar, the emporium of the Panjâb, between which place and Jummoo there has long been a close commercial connection, while the road is open for more

In Drew G-3 (1862-1872) 1875 AVI Kashmir AVI

487 494 months of the year than some of the others. But the path itself is not good, nor is the country it goes over favourable to communications; there are five distinct ridges of hill to be crossed, besides many ups and downs over spurs that cause almost as much labour as do the passes. Horses can pass along it, though with some difficulty; the greater part of the carriage is done by men, or, in the case of grain, by pack-bullocks.

The second road, by Bodil, is so far worse than the last that it is impassable for horses; it is only traversed by men, chiefly by those engaged in carrying up loads of salt and bringing down ghi.

No. 3 is a cross-road from Jummoo to join the next.

The road numbered 4, from Bhimbar over the Pîr Panjâl Pass, is the one, as told in Chapter v., that the Delhi Emperors used to go by, and that at this day English travellers much frequent. It is a road that one can ride over on a hill pony.

The next, from Bhimbar, by Râjâorî and Pûnch, to Sirînagar, is a combination of numbers 4, 5, and 6. It avoids the high Pîr Panjâl Pass, and for that reason it is freer from snow, and open for traffic earlier in the season, than the preceding one.

The route marked No. 6, from Jhelam, is not much used, since it traverses rough ground. In some respects, however, it has advantages over the others. It seems to me likely that when the railway from Lâhor is completed as far as Jhelam, that place will become a good starting-point for Kashmir, and this road may get more into favour, and merit a better construction and maintenance.

Route No. 7, from the British Hill-station of Marî, or Murree, is not much used for commercial purposes, but is a great deal frequented by English travellers. One can now go right up into the hills, to Marî itself, by post-carriage, and there, already in cool breezes, can at leisure prepare for the march to Kashmir. The road, too, is about the best of all; horses can go along it without danger.

Route No. 8, from Abbottâbâd by Muzafarâbâd, is the only one that is free, or nearly free, from snow in the winter; besides this

1: Drew G-3 (1862-1872) 1875 AV1 Kashmir AV1

it has the advantage of not going over high ground, the ups and downs in it are trifling; hence it is a convenient road for those whose way, from Kashmir, say, lies in the direction at Atak and Peshāwar. 487 494

Not all of these roads are open to the English traveller (whose journeyings involve special arrangements); the first three are closed to him. The others have been open to Englishmen for six months of the year. Quite lately new arrangements have been made; I am not sure whether or no this restriction about time has been taken off. There is now, I believe, a limitation of the number of officers of the army who may go to Kashmir for their leave; 200 at one time are allowed. The justification for this is the great requisition for carriage that, as will be seen below, each British traveller is sure to make.* [486]

The road I have chosen, for ourselves to look into the particulars of it, is a combination of Nos. 3 and 4. We shall go from Jummoo in a north-westerly direction, so as to cut into the road from Bhimbar at Rājāorī, and from there onwards to Sirīnagar.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE JOURNEY.

A few words before starting, as to certain specialities of travelling in the Himalayas. 484 565

The natives of India are good travellers. The poor man, one who gets his living by the use of his muscles, will make a bundle of his extra clothes (if he has any), of his bedding and his cooking-pots, and with that balanced on his head or slung over his shoulder, will make a long march without asking anything of anyone, except of the shopkeeper from whom he will buy his daily allowance of flour or rice. The class above him, those who get, say, their living by their pen, or by buying and selling, will surely have a pony for the march, probably a quiet, useful animal, one that ambles along at an easy pace; the bedding will be laid in folds on the saddle, and the rest of the baggage carried on the pummel or else made

* Some useful information about those routes which are open to European travellers will be found in Dr. Ince's 'Kashmir Handbook' (published by Wyman Brothers, Calcutta); and in Kashmir itself that book will be found very useful.

2: Gervis T-3 (no date) 1954 AVI Kashmir AVI

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Two Main Roads

491

Of the roads which lead out of the Valley into India and into Pakistan, there are two which are the most favoured, the one to Rawalpindi in Pakistan and known as the Jhelum Valley road, the other to Jammu and thence into India, usually referred to as the old Banihal cart road. Other routes exist; they were used in the old days by the Moghul Emperors when they came to the country, but the roads have not been reconstructed to take modern traffic.

[494]

In those old days the most favoured route was over the Pir Panjal Pass, which is at a height of eleven thousand feet. It took weeks to cover, with the men travelling on horseback, the women reclining not too comfortably in palanquins carried on the shoulders of sweating coolies, besides which there were large retinues of courtiers and retainers, together with companies of soldiers to protect them, in addition to hundreds of coolies and servants with all the paraphernalia, for these Emperors insisted on much of the pomp and ceremony which they had been accustomed to in their courts being continued with these peaceful entries into the country. At places on this old road are still to be seen the great serais, stone-walled acres of land in which the camps were set, but contained within the walls were rooms and a mosque since at times the ruler would tarry there for many days. There are still to be seen the ruins of towers which were really block houses, built to cover and protect the smaller bands of travellers who ventured the road. Where villages now are, there is usually to be found the place where such travellers halted for the night, and the old rest houses built since those days are in some cases in use to this day for the same purpose.

485

St Gervais T-2 (no date) 1984 AVI Kashmir AVI

The distance covered by this road to Srinagar is about two hundred miles. The motorist usually completed the journey in a day, starting off after an early breakfast and reaching Srinagar for dinner, though those who were out to enjoy the scenery, which at places is really lovely, or those who were nervous and could not stand for too many miles the dozens of twists and turns with steep ascents and descents, took two days to make the journey and stayed overnight at one of the many rest houses, usually choosing that at Domel.

In the old days when two-horsed tongas were used to travel the rough road, the journey was agony to the European, if he happened to be in one of the seats facing the poor wretched horses' galled, thin backs; the sight alone spoiled all pleasures of the glorious views, especially when for a stage they had a driver who never ceased to apply the so-called "whip"—a stick which only continued to bruise the spines of the poor creatures. On first making that journey there were few passengers who in their fury did not grab the stick from the man, usually breaking it over their knees to demonstrate their disgust of his treatment: only after this did the stick prove to the irate passenger its usefulness, for the wretched animals, instead of responding to this humane sentiment, just stood with legs firm and refused to budge, with the result that the driver won in the end. The syce together with his horses changed at every stage, these usually being five miles apart but depending on the gradient of road. The tonga went the whole way; it would hardly have been possible to unload and reload it each time, for luggage was packed and tied on everywhere, often with bed rolls roped to the top of the canvas cover, and suit cases tied on the top of the wheel mud-guards.

The poorer people, those who did not trudge the road with their loads upon their backs, travelled by bullock cart, which was also used for heavy luggage, the journey taking about two weeks, or in an ekka; this is a high slung, single-horse cart, over which is a framework rather like a bird cage on which is spread cloth—usually rags—to protect the women who travel in it, sitting on the hard board floor. The proper thing for the men to do is either sit in front, or if a servant was travelling with his master's luggage, he seated himself on top of it; if the

St Gervais T-8 (no date) 1954 AVI Kashmir AVI

4994 master also chose to make the journey this way, he sat facing backwards and had a step fitted on which to place his feet and so save them from dangling. The ekka took about five days to cover the road between Rawalpindi and Srinagar.

The "pleasures" of travel in those days have now gone through. The change came gradually, for after a while it was not unusual to pass a carriage and pair; now it is mostly cars and lorries which make the journey. The tongas, ekkas and bullock wagons are still on the road, but only between villages; even then 'bus services run between these, and lorry "seats" are to be had, either next to the driver—considered almost first class travel—or on top of the load. The driver of these usually expects to make quite a few rupees with these unofficial passengers who sleep, and have not been unknown to roll off from the high load.

4911 The route from Rawalpindi to Srinagar is divided up into fourteen stages, not that this interests the traveller by car as it did those who went behind horses. The first stage, a distance of fourteen miles to Baraka, is at an altitude of about seventeen hundred feet above the sea. The road is level, fringed with trees and generally uninteresting to one who has been on the plains. But for the next stage to Tret, the climb is up through low brown foothills; in summer these are sprinkled with burnt-up scrub; the sun, if the day has advanced, can be scorching, the road dusty; in spring, though, it is different, and becomes a endurable journey. As usual, at a difficult corner a toll bar is come upon. Tret stands elevated four thousand feet above the sea, and here is to be found the first rest house.

341 A further thirteen miles, and just two miles after Sunny
529 Bank, lies Murree, a famous and fashionable hill station spread out over the mountains at an altitude of anything between six and seven thousand feet, which have been reached through pine-covered slopes and up many zig-zag roads and hairpin bends. Here is built a modern town, with rest house, hotels, boarding houses, a great sanatorium, a convent, schools, cinemas and churches: it is the hill station for those who live in Rawalpindi, and also for many from Peshawar and Lahore. From here a lovely view can be had of the plains, while in the distance are the glorious snow-covered ranges of mountains, which are amazingly even in their height, few being below

2z Gerva T-3 (no date) 1984 AVI Kashmir AVI

491 the wide valley, so the patches of cultivated land increased in number. On the way we had only seen the road coolies at work —always in pairs, for one holds the handle of the shovel and the other the length of rope which is tied down near to the spade, as it takes two men to move a shovel full of hard rock—and the few men of the valley who were trudging the long road home so that they might save a few extra rupees to give their families after working on the other side of the mountains for months. We had also met odd parties of three or four men and women with great trusses of grass on their heads; from where they were coming or where going we could not imagine.

At the foot of the mountains, as the road flattened out, so the surface became smooth; no longer was the hard grip necessary; it was now difficult to find a patch of ground which was not under cultivation, each tiny field being divided from its neighbour by loose stone walls. Then we came on the terraced rice fields, with a stream, which could be diverted to any of them by damming it with stones, bouncing and sparkling over the rock bed. A few black buffaloes were grazing by the roadside under the eye of a couple of boys, whose one thrill in life seemed to be had by placing a stick across the road so that cars might crush it.

[494] Just before the village of Banihal, there is the toll post, after
[495] which come the houses, shops and the Dak bungalow, whilst here, when we filled up with petrol we found it cost a rupee a gallon less than in the Valley, such is the expense of the journey over the Pass.

From Banihal to Ramban, at a height of about five thousand feet, is a distance of twenty-three miles; there are few who do not consider this to be the most lovely stage of the route. For miles on end the road, which in this part is the original one, runs hundreds of feet above the river Chenab, but the valley is narrow, the grey rock on either side steep; the little valleys which come down to join that in which run river and road are thick with trees, as also are some of the more gentle slopes, but where they are not, the grey and blue shadings of the rocks add to the beauty of the glorious scene. In parts the giant rocks hang over the road, which on its other side is protected by a stone wall from the precipitous drop to the river. Occasionally a stream rushes down from above, in places it becomes a

The total expenditure incurred by the Jammu Municipality during the decade is as under :— 744 364

	Rs.
Expenditure on Public Health	— 330,849
" " Sanitation and Sanitary Improvements	— 165,250
" " Public Instruction	— 5,921

96 streets were paved and drained, 43 were drained only, one new road and one culvert were constructed, 2 roads were reconstructed, and 200 lights were added.

II. Improvement in Communications.—The principal requisites for the economic prosperity of a country is a sound system of communications by land, by water and during the recent progressive times also by air. By breaking up the isolation of the different parts of a country, bringing into closer and more intimate contact the village and the town and enabling the speedier development of the agricultural, mineral and other industrial resources of the country a backward state is soon brought to the front rank of civilized and advanced countries through the blessings of improved systems of transport and communications. 491 494

Want of suitable communications and transport facilities have proved great obstacles to the political and economic development of India and consequently still greater impediments in the case of our State. In India a large part of deficiency has been made up by the various systems of Railways and Roads which have worked great economic and social improvement by breaking up the isolation of the village, the immobility of labour and the conservatism of the people.

Unfortunately due to the hilly character of the country the average height of which is 5,000 feet above sea level and the mountain barriers that surround it, the work of improvement is not an easy and the progress cannot be expected to be as speedy as in the plains. In 1889 there was no continuous road to drive through to Kashmir although there existed patches of small lengths between different towns. The routes were difficult and passed over dangerous mountain and desolate rendering the journey to Kashmir very difficult. Thanks to the generous grants sanctioned by His Highness' Government on improvement of communications from year to year and during the short space of 40 years we find that marvellous progress has been made in this direction. The following are the principal road systems :—

The Jehlum Valley Road.—This road has a length of 132 miles from Srinagar to the Kohala Bridge where a further length of 64 miles of Kohala-Murree-Pindi route of the British territory connects the valley with the Punjab. Till the year 1922 this was the only road for vehicular communication between the Punjab and Kashmir. This road has no doubt opened up the country to a great extent and given great impetus to export and import trade which during the last decade has considerably increased in volume. The old type ekkas and bullock-carts a delightful and restful means of transport have been replaced by modern means of cheap and speedy transport by motor lorries. The increase of trade and traffic is evidenced by the increased revenue from the road toll which amounts to 3 lacs a year.

Gurais-Habibullah Road from Dawar.—This road with a length of 32 miles links up the State with the Kishen border at Kundan Gali where vehicular traffic passes over the Gurais-Habibullah road in the British territory till it joins Bunjwa at Abbottabad. During the decade improvements costing Rs. 97,500 were effected on this road.

The Banihal Cart Road.—Both the above routes to Srinagar being lengthy and indirect did not bring that close touch between the two provinces

of Jammu and Kashmir which was so essential for the development of the State. A long travel through the railway from Jammu to Rawalpindi, a tedious nightly change at Wazirabad Junction, arrangements for transport at Rawalpindi and then a halt on the way either on the British or the State side of Kohala were factors which combined to make the journey a tedious and unenviable one. To remedy this defect the Banihal Cart Road was started in 1909 and completed in 1922 at a cost of 41 lacs. It provides a direct link between Jammu and Srinagar (the two capitals of the State) and passing entirely through the State territories it covers a total length of 201 miles rising from Jammu to the Patnitop at an altitude of 7,000 feet and then after dropping down to the valley of the Chenab at Ramban it rises to the Banihal Pass at an altitude of 9,000 feet whereas it drops again to the valley of Kashmir which has a uniform level of over 5,000 feet above sea. The opening of this important road in 1922 ushers in the decade under review a special significance as the work is perhaps the biggest and costliest feat accomplished in the history of the State Public Works Department. The road is progressively growing in importance and popularity and during the last few years the volume of traffic has so much increased that in 1987-88 (1931) 14,017 motor lorries, 3,612 motor cars, 495 tongas, 63 ekkas, and 197 bullock-carts passed over the road in a single year and the road toll receipts averaged to Rs. 333,000 per annum. The small figures of traffic in the case of tongas, ekkas and bullock-carts is a clear evidence of the facts that these slow means of transport have been almost completely routed by the motor vehicles and the slight trace still lingering only plies between short stages and not on the entire length of the road journey.

The Srinagar-Gandarbal Road, the Naninbagh Road and Achibal-Aishmuqam Roads were unrolled during the decade while general improvement and metalling of the Srinagar roads, the widening of the Gupkar Road and the construction of the Boulevard Road from the Capitol to Shersinbagh round the Dal Lake mark a great step towards advancement. In the Jammu Province the progress during the decade has by no means been slow as is evidenced by the completion of the Mirpur-Chenkan Road at a cost of Rs. 211,313 in 1986 (1929) which has greatly helped the development of trade, traffic and the resources of the country. Its utility for military purposes was established during the recent disturbances when it served a very useful purpose in carrying regiments of the State and British Military to quell the agitation in Mirpur and surrounding area.

Samba Road—Although only 17 miles out of 21 of this road have been completed and were serving but been opened over the sandy portions to facilitate traffic, yet the road is open to lorry traffic and Samba—important stronghold of the Dogra Rajputs—is only an hour's distance from Jammu now.

Jammu-Kathua Road—Though only a fair weather road and hitherto not in operation has brought the Kathua District (Head Quarters (which formerly could only be reached in two days through a circuitous route preceding upto Pathankote by Railway and then over miles of bad road) into direct touch with the Capital (Jammu). The journey of two days can now be accomplished in four hours in a lorry which also goes to Jammugarh tehsil. It is hoped that greater attention to the road in future will open out this part of the country which has very good rice producing areas.

Akhnur to Manmohar Thakur (length 32 miles)—Passing along the foundation of the Penjar Canal upto its end it takes a turn to Manmohar Thakur. This is a kachha road and if it is extended to Mirpur, as is proposed, Jammu will be connected with Mirpur through an all-State route leading to greater security and prosperity of the Highland subjects in Mirpur Wazarat and Akhnur tehsil.

Kathua-Basohli Road—Formerly a wholly kachha road with a length of 24 miles out of which 18 miles pass almost through hilly tracts has now been made fit for wheeled traffic for the first nine miles and expenses of Rs. 48,000 has been incurred to make the whole of it fit for wheeled traffic.